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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2017
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0024
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0110
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0157
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2465

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KOLKATA 000167

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENGR](#) [EMIN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [SENV](#) [TRGY](#) [ASEC](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: TRIBES NEAR INDIA'S URANIUM MINES SUFFER FROM CONGENITAL DEFECTS, CANCER, AND TUBERCULOSIS

REF: 07 KOLKATA 0215

KOLKATA 00000167 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Jadugoda, located in the mineral-rich Singhbhum district of Jharkhand in Eastern India, supplies much of India's uranium needs. Mining uranium there, however, comes at a significant human and environmental cost according to a recent study by the non-government organization (NGO) Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IPDP). Indigenous groups -- the Santhal, Munda and Ho tribes -- living close to the mines reportedly suffer high-rates of cancer, physical deformities, blindness, brain damage and other ailments. There have been repeated leakages from pipes carrying radioactive tailing residues, exposing villagers to significant radiation levels. The Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL), which operates the mines, refutes the contamination allegations and refuses to acknowledge these issues. Post contacts, citing independent research, say that it is difficult to point out any reason other than radiation for the apparent human and environmental problems at Jadugoda. The Indian nuclear establishment will have to adopt more transparent safety policies and procedures if it seeks to expand its capacity. END SUMMARY

Accidents Happen

¶2. (U) India's major uranium mining facility at Jadugoda is located in Jharkhand, 185 miles Southwest of Kolkata and 15 miles southeast of Jamshedpur. The UCIL mines there produced 1,200 ton of uranium ore per day when they were first inaugurated in 1967. Since then, older sites have been shut down and four new sites added, increasing Jadugoda's production capacity to 2,090 tons per day in 2007. The growth in operations has also increased the number of accidents and leakage of radioactive material, the last one reported as recently as February 2008 when a pipe carrying radioactive slurry to a reservoir burst, exposing villagers to radiation.

¶3. (U) The media reported earlier that on December 24, 2006, another pipe carrying radioactive sludge from the uranium mill to a storage dam had burst, discharging its contents into a nearby creek (reftel). The accident occurred in Dungridih, a small village near Jadugoda, inhabited by displaced families

whose land was acquired to construct two of the three dams -- known as tailings ponds -- that store this radioactive sludge.

Safety claims not credible

¶4. (U) Apparently, UCIL does not have its own alarm system for these types of accidents and became aware of the leak from villagers who gathered at the site after the pipe had burst. Local contacts told Post that the radioactive sludge spewed into the creek for nine hours before the flow was shut off. A thick layer of sludge along the surface of the creek killed fish, frogs, and other animal life. UCIL did not alert the communities living downstream about the contamination, and local newspaper reports said that UCIL quietly repaired the pipe and removed the sludge from the creek.

¶5. (U) Frequent leaks in the pipelines are not the only hazard Jadugoda's tr